***Examples to Follow - PH75-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:17-19***

We are looking at Philippians 3:17-19. This passage of Scripture describes people that we as Christians should follow and should imitate. It also describes people that we should shun, and that we should not imitate. Paul has been calling upon Christians who have a developed spiritual maturity structure in their soul to have his attitude toward spiritual failures and weaknesses, and to share his attitude toward spiritual prominence. That attitude was: confess sin; forget it; and, move on. That attitude was not to think more highly of himself than he ought to, because he happened to be a celebrity, and because people gave him some spiritual prominence. He recognized that all of that was meaningless with God.

Paul has reminded those who cannot, at some point, enter into all that he has taught, that they may expect further divine illumination, and that if they would keep moving with the Lord, they would understand things that may be hard or things that perhaps, at that moment, they can't fully enter into. That's always a good principle to remember when you are being taught in a local congregation setting. There will be times when you will hear things that will actually be beyond your spiritual capacity to enter into, because of your level of maturity as of that point. Or it would be something that's so different from the way you've always acted, and that it comes as such a shock, that that in itself is all you can take at that moment, and your initial reaction is to reject it.

So Paul says, "I've told you some very hard things. I've spoken very strongly against certain groups and against certain practices. If you can't go along with all that, just take time, and you will see that God will illuminate your understanding, and you will see that what I have shown you and what I have told you is indeed the mind of Christ." He says that the level of spiritual maturity, in any case, that we have reached should be the thing we continue along. That same line of maturity that you have been following, and that has brought you to this point, wherever you are, is the thing you should keep doing. Don't become a rebel in spiritual things because you hear something you don't understand, or something you don't think you can go along with, and the first thing you do is start going backwards down the spiritual maturity trail.

There is a certain type of ignorant mentality among fundamentalist Christians that believe that the thing to do when they hear something in the church service that they don't agree with is to go and find themselves another church. Of course, what they eventually do is remain at the babyhood stage because they protect themselves from ever hearing, or ever accepting, anything beyond the level to which they've grown. The apostle Paul recognized that this was always a problem, so that's what he's talking about.

This spiritual maturity that he is referring to is maximum divine viewpoint functioning in a believer's mind. This is essential to building human society in order for that society to be blessed by God. If the citizens of a nation are blessed, it is because that nation is building its society upon divine viewpoint principles. Western civilization is a product of the divine viewpoint which we inherited from the Bible via the Jewish people. Ancient cultures which were influenced by the Jews, and by the revelation that God gave to the Jews, were the nations that became great in the ancient world. They had glory; they had power; and, they had freedom. When we lose divine viewpoint, as we are rapidly doing in American culture, the result is that the glory of the nation is sapped; our freedoms begin to disappear; the nation becomes powerless; and, the nation stands in a position of fear in relationship to other nations.

So this hazard to personal happiness faced the Philippian Christians – the hazard of getting sidetracked from divine viewpoint, and the movement toward spiritual maturity. There is a certain unsaved religious type who always infiltrates local churches. These are people who say, "I'm a believer. I'm a Christian." In a church that is not careful on screening people who want to become members (screening them relative to their salvation), they will get many people in a local church who are religious people, and who are church people, but who are not born again.

The estimate has been made by responsible people who move through various church circles, and who have some basis of making the judgment, that in the average church, probably only 25% of the people in it are born again. Now, these are churches which, by and large, are not heavily resting upon the Word of God; they are not indoctrinating people in the concepts of the Word of God; or, they don't even look upon the Bible as the main reason that they gather. They gather for other things. The Bible eventually becomes kind of a nice thing that you have there, but it's secondary. It's shocking to think that 75% of the people floating around you in a church could be simply professing believers. But you can immediately see what's going to happen to that congregation; to that church ministry; and, into the thinking of people who are influenced by that 75% of really nice, sweet, wonderful people, but who are not born again. Their minds can only operate on human viewpoint.

This is what the average church is confronted with. Not only do they have professing unbelievers who function with human viewpoint, but even the Christians, because they are untaught in doctrine – that's all they know how to function on. So they function on human viewpoint. Even in a church like ours, where we dignify the Word of God, and where we bow to no man's opinions and to no man's desires (if they are contrary to the Word of God), you know how hard it is for ourselves not to fall into human viewpoint attitudes, concepts, and expressions. We catch ourselves up short and say, "Wait a minute. That's how they do these things out there in the world. That's how they think out in the world. I'm a believer. I belong to a different company altogether. This is not the kind of thinking that I do."

Now, the apostle Paul is going to define for us very distinctly, in this passage today, the nature of the thinking of the world – the human viewpoint thinking of the untaught Christian and of the unsaved professing unbeliever. So the people who are filled with human viewpoint, but have a great deal of religious zeal, appear to be very genuine. Thus, they become very influential within the Christian community. So Paul begins to warn the Philippian Christians about this. Remember that this was an ideal church that had very few problems; that was really functioning on doctrine; and, that was a well-taught church. So it's interesting that even to this church, the apostle Paul says, "I want to warn you that there are some people that you should pattern your life after within the local church, and some people you shouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole. Just stay away from those polecats altogether, because what they're going to do is hurt you spiritually. So he gives us a very strong warning.

**Brethren**

First of all, he begins in verse 17 with the statement of examples to follow. His first point is to imitate your spiritual teachers: "Brethren." The word is "adelphos" in the Greek. "Adelphos" indicates that Paul is speaking to fellow Christians. He is speaking to people who are in the family of God. Remember that the family of God is a reality. There are some people who belong to the family of God, and there are some people who do not belong to the family of God. Those who are local church members should all belong to the family of God. That's what we hopefully try to ensure as being the case. But within the church, you might even have people who are not in God's family.

Certainly, outside of the church, all week long you are dealing with people. You are involved with people who are not "adelphos" to you. They are not brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very genuine and very real family. For those who are your brethren, they have a high priority claim upon you. They have a high priority claim upon you for your help; for your concern; for your prayer; and, for your consideration of their needs. If they're in the family of God, they deserve your concern more than anybody else.

This passage deals with believers who are friends of Jesus Christ. It is going to also deal with people who are unbelievers, and who thereby are enemies of Jesus Christ, while they pretend and profess to be His followers. He is dealing with an attitude toward the cross of Jesus Christ, and all that that cross represents of the grace of God, and the attitude of God in the rejection of human good.

Paul says, "Brethren (those of you who are in my family), be followers together of me." The word "be" is the Greek word "ginomai." "Ginomai" actually means "to become" So Paul may, in effect, really be saying to them, "I want you to become, and continue to become, something that you already are in the process of doing. It's in the present tense, which means continually be this. This is middle voice, but this is one of those words that has a middle voice, but it has an active meaning. So it means that by their own choice, they are to seek to be this (to become this). It's indicative of statement of fact.

What is it he wants them to be? He wants them to be, "Followers together." This is kind of along Greek word: "summimetes." This is what the grammarians call a "hapax legomena." That means that this is a word which is used only once in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit took this word out; used it once; and, never used it again, thus giving it a rather special significance: "Follower's together." Let's break it down.

This is a word that comes from the little preposition "sun" as you see at the first part of the word. "Sun" means "with" or "together." When you put it together with the second word "imitators" ("mimetes"), the letter "n" at the end of "sun" becomes an "m," just for pronunciation sake. But it is the preposition "with" or "together," and "imitators." When you put those words together, what you get is "imitators together," or "joint imitators."

Paul is not saying, "I want you people to imitate something along with me." What Paul is saying is, "I want to ask all those of you who are members of the local church at Philippi, as a body (the whole church), to be a group who (altogether) imitates something. I want the church to be one big copycat." So we translate this: "Brethren, become joint imitators of me," or, "Be unitedly imitators of me." The apostle Paul adds the word "of me," meaning himself – that they are to be imitators of him. What Paul means, then, is that the Philippian Christians, as a body, should follow his spiritual example as their founding apostle.

**Apostles**

Remember that most of these churches generally (initially) had a founding apostle. That was the business of the apostles. They were the supreme authorities in the local church. They went around the New Testament world, and they started churches. An apostle, who began a certain church, then had an authority over that church which continued. He could write back to that church, and he would tell them what they could do, and what they could not do. He would come back on the scene and look the situation over, and see how they were progressing spiritually, or he would send an envoy (an agent) back in his name, and he would give directions to them, and he would get information about them. The apostles were very conscious of the churches that they had founded, and they had a certain responsibility for them. Only an apostle could have authority over many churches.

**The Pope**

Today we do not have apostles, and therefore we have nobody who can act in the role of a bishop in the sense of being a super authority over several churches. Any church organization which has spiritual leaders who are in authority over several churches is out of line with the Word of God. Of course, there are many denominations which are built upon this non-biblical principle – that one man has authority over many churches. Of course, the epitome of that is the Roman Catholic Church, with the pope, who is supposedly in authority over the whole denomination of Roman Catholicism, and over all churches. The pope views himself as the bishop of Christ and as the apostle of Christ. He views himself as one of the apostles – that he has this kind of authority.

Now, the pope is right in his concept of what an apostle's authority constituted, but he's wrong in thinking that he is an apostle with that authority. The only authority that's left today is one pastor-teacher – who is an elder-bishop over one local church. His authority does not go beyond the confines of that one congregation. But within that congregation, once he is recognized by that congregation as their pastor-teacher, he then has the teaching authority within that local church. So the apostle Paul here is asking them, as an apostle, who has even super authority over whoever was their local church pastor, to be unitedly followers or imitators of him.

**Follow Paul**

The basis for the fact that Paul could call upon them for this kind of following, and the basis for calling upon them to imitate him is found in 1 Corinthians 11:1 where the apostle says, "Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." The apostle Paul could say, "I want you to follow my thinking; my ways; and, my directions because I am following Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul was daily building his life on the divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine, so he was mentally oriented to God's thinking. Each person builds his own life on the information that he receives. Remember that everything you have, you ever received from another. All of the thinking that you have had today, you did not originate. You received it from another. You have built yourself upon what you received, but first you had to receive something on which to build. First, you had to inhale before you could exhale.

When a baby is born, it can never exhale until first it takes that one monstrous, monumental, once-in-a-lifetime, deep breath that it takes, and it never takes as deep a breath again as the one that initiates life. Until it takes that breath, it can never exhale. So the point is that until somebody has given you some basic thinking and information, which comes first of all from your parents, you cannot have any ground for any kind of thinking at all. So we receive information from someplace. The apostle Paul says you can take information from me, and you can depend on it. You can imitate me because I am thinking the way God thinks. My thinking is based upon doctrine.

The modern educators know this, and know this very well. I'll give you a briefing at the church banquet on my trip to the Christian School Administrators' Clinic at Pensacola, Florida. It is my conviction (my impression) very definitively at this point that that trip is going to have historical repercussions for Berean Christian Academy and the ministry of this church. I don't often attend clinics, and I don't often attend conferences, but when the Lord pushes me to do so, I'm very much aware of it. And I know now exactly why He did it.

One of the things that was pointed out at that conference is that the United States government is now sponsoring (with taxpayers' money) a pilot program where children leave their homes in the lower grades – some, I understand, down as far as two-year-olds. They leave their homes on Monday, and they do not return home again until Friday. They stay all week at school in a school situation so that they may be instructed in a way that they're not distracted by something their parents have to say. So these children go all week long, and then they come home on the weekends, providing there is not something going on at school on the weekend, and they have to stay for that. That was pretty shocking for me to hear.

And I'll be, I get to New Orleans between planes, and I pick up a paper and I read about it. The nation has gone mad. We all know that it's ruled by madmen. We've learned that a long time ago. But what a lot of people don't understand is that it is also ruled by madmen in the field of education, and that it is ruled by madmen because their mentalities are filled with human viewpoint thinking. The apostle Paul is talking exactly about that sort of thing in this passage. Tragedy comes to a person if he does not stand up against human viewpoint thinking, and if he does not recognize that he has nothing within himself to guide his thinking except what he takes in from the Word of God.

That's why the Bible says, "If you meditate upon Scripture, you will be a winner in all of your endeavors in life. You will enjoy success, and you will enjoy prosperity." This is a promise of the Word of God; the God who lives; and, the God who does not lie. All you have to do is put Him to the test. Just grab hold of Joshua 1:8 and run with it, and you will discover a monumental return in your life for having done so. What the Bible means in meditating is to think upon God's doctrinal principles until they become second-nature to you.

How many times have you operated on some human viewpoint principle, and now you can look back and say, "I'm certainly sorry I did that? I'm certainly sorry I made this move in life; that I entered into this business deal; that I entered into this association; that I moved along in this social activity; or, that I entered into these relationships." Well you look back upon them with regret for one reason, and for one reason only. You were saturated with human viewpoint thinking, so you acted upon the devil's mentality, and he has brought grief into your life.

Yet, God says, "I want to help you parents rear your children in a way that will be a blessing to them and to you. I'll give you the information. I'll give you the wisdom you need to do that. I won't put it into your minds overnight." You cannot take the Bible and put it under your pillow at night and sleep on it, and rise up filled with divine viewpoint. I know that some of you probably have been doing that. It won't work. You are going to have to be taught, and you're going to have to teach your children, and you going to have to recognize that you have nothing but what you have received from outside of yourself. Once you get the facts straight in your mind that you've got nothing to offer, and that it's only God in His grace who has something to offer us, you'll be on your way.

So each person builds his own life on information received outside of himself. The kind of local church organization a congregation builds is the result of the concepts that it accepts and that it follows. It gets those concepts either from the world, or it gets them from the Word of God.

So imitating spiritual leadership, which is based upon divine viewpoint mentality, is a good thing to do. Imitating anybody whose mind is saturated with divine viewpoint is a good thing to do. However, the apostle Paul makes this a major principle of leadership. You will find that he repeats this in several of his other letters. For example, he repeats this in 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 2 Thessalonians 3:9, and 1 Corinthians 4:16. The apostle Paul reiterates this basic concept: "Imitate me; follow me; do what you see me doing; accept the thinking that I am giving you; and, act upon it."

Such a group response to right doctrine and right conduct is going to be a great help to the individual Christian. It's a lot easier for us to do what we should do as individual believers if we're moving in a group that is functioning on divine viewpoint, and if we are in a group responding to the instruction of its pastor-teacher. This, incidentally, happens to be the basis of fellowship in the local church. The basis of fellowship in the local church is not because you happen to get the same emotional fix that somebody else does, or because you happen to like to do what someone else does. The basis of fellowship in the local church is that both of you are mutually sharing God's divine viewpoint. When you have that, you have a ground for expressing the relationship that you have to one another as the family of God.

So, first of all, the apostle Paul here in verse 17 says, "Brethren (those of you who are in my family), be imitators (as a group) of me, your spiritual leader. Follow me."

**Follow Godly Christians**

Next, he says, "And mark them." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai" which indicates that Paul is going to give another guideline for Christian fellowship in the local church. He uses the word "mark." The word "mark" in Greek is "skopeo." "Skopeo" means "to look at;" "to fix the eyes upon;" or, "to observe intently." It is present tense. It means constantly take note of such. It is active. It is your personal responsibility to be observing this. And notice that it is imperative. It is God's command. This is an order from Almighty God to every believer via the apostle Paul. You are to look around you within your congregation; within the congregation of other churches that you may come in contact with; and, within the circle of organizations where there are Christians, and you are to observe something about the people who make up those groups.

"Mark them." The word "them" is the definite article "the" in the Greek, "hoi." It is in the plural here, and it means a certain group of Christians. Not all fall into this group. The point here is to identify those who are positive to Bible doctrine, and to match up to their example. "Mark those Christians who walk." The word for "walk" is "peripateo." "Peripateo" refers to a lifestyle. It is the lifestyle of a certain group – the expression of their learned behavior patterns. This is the whole round of activities of a person resulting from the principles that he accepts for living, and the things that he has taken from outside into himself. How a person acts very much reflects what he thinks. People can demonstrate what they think in a very deliberate way by their external actions.

This is exactly what the hippies did. The hippie rebellious attitude became the lifestyle of young people in this country, under the influence of popular leadership such as the Beatles and the hard rock music groups. These groups wanted to express the fact that they were against all that the establishment stood for. The establishment stood for a certain way of life.

**The Rule of Law**

For example, when our founding fathers were confronted with creating a nation, they had to make a decision, "Who is going to tell us what to do?" That was the first decision they had to make. "Up to now, we have had a king over us. We have had a sovereign. He had life and death control over us. He could tell us what to do and what not to do. We have had superior authorities that he has placed over us. Other nations have had dictators that they have taken upon themselves. This strong man at the top told everybody what to do. Who's going to tell us what to do in this new nation?"

And they made a very wise decision that has been nothing but blessing to us because it is a biblical decision. They decided that we would be a people ruled by law, and that law would tell us what to do. And that law would be the result not of the sovereign arbitrary dictates of a king, or some dictatorial ruler, but that we would appoint a body of rulers over ourselves. We would say, "Now you make rules. You make laws. Whatever laws you make, everybody in this country is going to obey them. Everybody will be treated equally; everybody will be expected to obey; and, everybody will be punished when they break it. The rule over us is going to be a rule of law."

The reason they did that was because they realized that in this way there would be maximum blessing for the individual citizen. There would be maximum freedom. With laws made and enforced, and everybody obeying them, you could walk down the street without fear that somebody is going to do you in. Your property would be protected. Stealing would be dealt with. You would have freedom to be able to enjoy what you had without fear that somebody was going to take it away from you. It was just the best way of life to deal with a group of people who have inherently an old sin nature. They had these biblical understandings in their background. They knew what the nature of man was. They knew what power does to a person – that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

So they brought all these checks and balances and they set up a system of law. That's why the establishment of this government is based upon the concept that we are not ruled by some politburo that perpetuates itself, and we are not ruled by some king; some dictator; or some Hitler-like character. We are a people that are governed by law.

The hippies came along, and they rejected that – a very biblical concept, and one that had brought blessings to millions of people. They said, "We're going to have to show that we reject the law; that we reject this rule; and, that we reject this system. We want no rules. We want anarchy. We want to be free." So they said, "How shall we demonstrate that?" And from then on, they began devising ways to indicate that they were free of the establishment. Drugs became a big thing. Why? "It's illegal to use drugs. We break the law. We violate the attitudes of our society, so we go in for drugs. We want to mark ourselves as different." In our society, women are women and men are men. That's distinct. "We're going to attack that. So the men are going to grow long hair down to their shoulders so they look very female. The women will do the same, and you can't tell the difference."

This has had many repercussions within our society. You may not realize it, but we have a lady here in the state of Texas that has been giving the Texas State Board of Education a fit because she has been examining Texas school books that are up for adoption, and has been giving the state adoption committee a rough time – so rough that she actually won her cause to the extent that the publishers were stopped dead in their tracks in books that they were going to publish. This was because the publishers sent down to the writers certain directives. These were directives which were the direct result of this mentality that has come out of the hippie rebellion in its various expressions, and which have found expression also in such things as the feminist movement. The publishers, as the result of where the state of Texas was going, sent down directives to the textbook writers that they were to avoid certain things.

For example, they told the textbook writers, "Never talk about a boy going fishing with his father. If you have stories that convey that kind of a picture, take it out. Never convey anything in the book that talks about a girl baking a cake with her mother. If you have something about a girl doing something with her mother in the kitchen, take it out. Now, it's okay to do it the other way. It's okay if the father takes his daughter fishing, or the mother takes her son to bake a cake."

You might say, "What's that? Why are they doing that?" It is in order to fulfill that which has been instilled of human viewpoint into our mentality to make the sexes indistinguishable. The feminist wants exactly that. They have been the prime movers. And Mrs Gabler, who has been researching these textbooks caught the trend, and I could give you many more. All of these were deliberately to break down the very distinctions that the Word of God makes. And this great woman has blown the whistle on them, so the publishers have had to backtrack very quickly in order to reword the textbooks, to take that sort of thing out, and to let boys be boys, and girls be girls.

They tried to do this previously with evolution. They had statements in the textbooks like, "Evolution is now no longer in the category of a theory, but is now a proven fact." When this lady got on them and started raising a furor, they discovered that the state had such a reaction from the citizens of Texas that they could not accept those textbooks, and they had to send them all back and have them rewritten. The publishers howled because she has cost them millions of dollars. Every textbook they printed was a loss to them. Praise God for that.

What did they do that for? Because they picked up a human viewpoint mentality, and that's what Paul is trying to tell us about here. When you think that way, there is no end to where you will go. You will become an animal; you will become so disoriented; you will become weak; and, you will be destroyed.

So hairstyles are not insignificant little things. They are the reflection of a degenerative attempt to remove what God has placed within the human race. The styles of dress are the same thing. The whole miniskirt fad was a deliberate attempt to violate the morality of Scripture. All of the sexual abandonment and all of the accepting of homosexuality is rampant. It is absolutely frightfully rampant in this country now, and in the highest echelons of society and government. The Word of God absolutely condemns this.

I'm happy to say that the Supreme Court, because the liberal element has gradually been weeded out, has begun to come back to sanity. They passed down a ruling recently that a state could pass laws against homosexuality, even in private, and bring it under prosecution. That is exactly the way it should be, because this is the thing that is not just freedom. It is the law being used to justify that which the Word of God condemns; which is human viewpoint; which brings disaster; which brings pain; and, which brings grief to people – not blessing and happiness. The people who know what God thinks need to stand up and say, "God says this is wrong, therefore we cannot tolerate it. It no longer is a matter of your choice. It is no longer a matter of your freedom." If they do not stand up for these things, then that nation is going to go down.

We are faced with the same thing on capital punishment. The Supreme Court next June is going to hand down the ruling whether capital punishment can be performed in this country or not. The Word of God says you are to perform it, and if you do not, then you have taken a step in the direction of man's thinking again, and your own self-destruction. There was a time when all of the liberal mentalities were very smugly saying that, "We have statistics to prove that without capital punishment, murder has not increased. As a matter of fact, it has decreased." So I was amused listening on my trip to Florida that the reports have now come through, and that that viewpoint has been changed. The criminologists are now painfully admitting that murder has skyrocketed, because without this biblical restraint, it is better to kill your victim than let him identify you later.

So the whole point here is that the apostle Paul is saying that there are some people who have a human viewpoint mentality. They even move among Christians. They have a mentality of human viewpoint which will destroy all the blessing and happiness and things that God has for you. Instead of prosperity and happiness being in your life, and instead of God being able to bring good things into your life, you have put yourself in a position where you expose yourself to everything that Satan can do to you.

"Brethren, be followers as a group of me. But mark (note) those who carry and who walk with certain attitudes and certain principles." The apostle Paul often uses this word "peripateo" to indicate a lifestyle of a certain group – a learned behavior pattern. We have this in Romans 6:4, Romans 8:1, 1 Corinthians 3:3, Galatians 5:16, and Ephesians 2:2. All of these are used to describe personal conduct. So that's what he means by "peripateo:" "Notice how these people act."

Then comes the word "even." The Greek word is "houtos" which means "thus" or "in this way." "Note carefully those who walk thus." The word is "kathos" which means "according as" or "just as." This introduces the explanation of "thus." "Those who walk even (or thus) as you have us for an example." This is "echo." It is present active indicative. Present tense indicates to constantly have. Active indicates before each Christian personally. Indicative is a statement of fact. "As you have us." This is the Greek word "ego" which is the personal pronoun. This is in the plural form, and it's "us" because Paul is now thinking about himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

He is saying, "Follow me as your spiritual leader, but also observe other people, and notice those who also follow according to" what? "According to my example" – my "tupos." The word "tupos" is the word that is used to describe the impression that you would make if you pressed something in wax, for example. Or this would be the case if you had a metal dye; you hit it with a hammer; and, you made a stamp into something. This is the word that the Greek had: "tupos." Paul here views himself as a spiritual mark. He is an identifying mark – a mark which is made by doctrine, and is to be used as a frame of reference to identify those who possess biblical principles.

In other words, Paul says, "I am a mark. You follow me. I reflect to you, and I have talked to the principles of divine viewpoint. I've tried to relate this to our society; to what it is thinking; and, to why society is expressing itself as it does. Now you are to use this as a frame of reference to identify those who also follow in this same pattern as you see me following." This is the word which is used in John 20:25 of the prints of the wound of the nail in the hand of Jesus. It made that mark. The Philippian Christians are to copy Paul, who is a copy of the original, Jesus Christ. Imitating Paul meant loyalty to divine viewpoint concepts. It's necessary to know the Word of God first before you can imitate it. You have to know what God has said and done before you can follow it. This calls for the totality of a Christian life. This means that there are no parts of your life that are not under divine viewpoint.

It is amazing how somebody who can sit in church on Sunday; who can sing the hymns very vociferously and loudly and strongly; and, who can participate in prayer, can cheat during the week in business. He can be untrustworthy in some phase of his life. His love for Jesus does not extend to his expression in his daily business. It is amazing how your love for Jesus will not be reflected in the music that you listen to. Your love for Jesus does not carry over into the lyrics of songs that you sing that are degrading, dishonoring, and blasphemous to Him. It is amazing how your love for Jesus does not carry over into your economics.

Because your love for Jesus means love for His word, you should recognize the personal self-reliance, the free enterprise, and the capitalistic concepts that are in the Word of God. Yet, you attend church, and you're ready to back socialistic, communistic concepts. In your social life, your love for Jesus does not express itself. You would be willing to go to movies; to entertainments; and, to dramas that are vulgar; obscene; and, degrading to your soul, and to which you are willing to expose yourself. Why? Well, because you have freedom. Or, like I've heard some preacher say, "I just won't know what my people are thinking unless I go to these dirty movies." I usually have the suspicion that it's an assignment they enjoy, and it's a burden they willingly carry for the Lord.

But just remember the principle about what I have received from another. Don't ever forget that principle. What you are is what you're taking in. That's what we all are; that's how we operate; and, that's how we function. So I get a little tired of these people who are so loud in their declarations of how much they love Jesus, and then they can't control their tempers; they can't control their mouths; they can't control the desires of their old sin nature; they can't control the conduct of their own integrity and honesty in what they do; and, so on. Until a believer loves Jesus Christ with all his soul; with all his mind; and, with all his will, he's going to lack a sense of completeness. That kind of completeness only comes through doctrine.

So the first point that we have covered today in verse 17 is that the apostle Paul says, "There are some people that spiritually you should respond to, and some people that you should follow and that you should welcome." This begins with your spiritual leaders. They become a mark (a stamp), identifying what Jesus Christ thinks – what is pleasing to Him, and what is displeasing to Him. Secondly, it is those who reflect that spiritual leader's mark. So pattern yourself and associate yourself with that group of people – spiritual leaders who are on the Word of God; who are sound in the Word of God; and, people who follow that kind of soundness.

Now, there is another group of humanity in verses 18-19, which we will look at next time, which you should shun. This group is a nightmare. This group is a horrendous nightmare. It is the epitome of the apostasy of human viewpoint thinking. We're going to look in greater detail next time on what human viewpoint thinking will give you, and what the results will be in your life. It will complete the picture for you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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